Towards a cultural psychology of music education

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Chapter 1

Towards a cultural psychology of music education

Margaret S. Barrett

Introduction

Cultural psychology is an idea that is at once both old and new; a tension and ambiguity that is captured powerfully in the subtitle of Michael Cole's seminal book *Cultural psychology: the once and future discipline* (1996). Cole's reference to a 'once and future' discipline acknowledges that the origins of the contemporary field of cultural psychology lie in the work of earlier scholars such as the eighteenth century Neapolitan philosopher Giambattisto Vico (1725/1948). Vico sought to develop a science of human nature that was distinct from a science of the natural world and suggested that the investigation of social and cultural phenomena, our lived worlds, required a different approach to that employed in the study of the physical world. Cole summarizes this approach as one in which 'human nature must necessarily be understood through an historical analysis of language, myth, and ritual' (1996, p. 23). This notion has been influential in the study of human endeavour in many domains, for example, those of anthropology and ethnography; domains that seek to understand the individual human in and through the social and cultural settings in which s/he lives and works. Cole traces the development of historical, locally contingent theories of mind, and the cultural–historical sciences, and contrasts these with ahistorical, universal theories of mind in his outlining of a possible cultural psychology. His text may be viewed as one of a number of significant markers in a (re)turn to cultural psychology in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.

The (re)turn to cultural psychology may be attributed in part to the 're-discovery' in the early 1960s, and onwards, of the work of Soviet psychologists Vygotsky, Leontiev, Luria and their colleagues. The translation and publication of these researchers' theoretical and empirical works into a range of languages, including English and German, precipitated a growing interest in a cultural perspective on the theory and practice of psychology. The impact of this event is evident in domains such as educational psychology (Bruner, 1990, 1996), developmental

psychology (Rogoff, 2003; Schweder, 1991; Schweder et al., 1998), and social psychology (Fiske, Kitayama, Markus, & Nisbett, 1998), in which the principles of a cultural psychology underpin the work of a number of scholars. Despite growing interest in the tenets and practices of a cultural psychology approach, that cultural psychology is still viewed as an emerging domain is evidenced in the range of interrelated terms that are applied to the field, including sociocultural psychology, cultural–historical psychology, and cultural–historical activity theory (CHAT). Chaiklin (2001), who uses the term cultural–historical psychology, suggests that the field has yet to be 'institutionalized'. He comments: 'Cultural–historical psychology is young as an institutionalized practice, even if it is old as an intellectual practice' (2001, p. 16), and suggests that the lack of an institutionalized structure for cultural–historical psychology rests in the 'suppression of the Vygotskian tradition in the Soviet Union starting officially from 1936 with the Pedagogical Decree and continuing until the mid-1950s' (2001, p. 18). Regardless of which term or label researchers employ to identify their work, an alignment with the Vygotskian tradition, and contemporary developments from that tradition, tends to be a common and integral component of their work.

A field might be viewed to be coming of age when a Handbook is published. Such an event tends to mark out the territory, identify what is thought and known at a particular point in time, and indicate those areas that are ripe for further exploration. The field of cultural psychology has been marked by two such Handbook publications (Kitayama & Cohen, 2007; Valsiner & Rosa, 2007). It is not my intention here to provide a comparative analysis of the approaches taken in these publications; rather, my purpose is to identify some markers of the field's current growth, and to acknowledge the wide-ranging views and positions that attend to contemporary studies in and of cultural psychology. This overview provides a context for considering potential and actual applications of a cultural psychology of music education.

Accounts of cultural psychology

Cultural psychology has been described and defined in diverse ways. Chaiklin suggests that cultural psychology is 'the study of the development of psychological functions through social participation in societally-organized practices' (Chaiklin, 2001, p. 21). This definition proceeds from the study of the individual, to the sociocultural context, and might be viewed as a form of methodological individualism. Cultural psychology might also be viewed as the study of social and cultural practices, and the relationships that hold between social and cultural practices and the development of individual and collective psychological processes. Cultural psychology approaches acknowledge the role of material culture (including objects, artefacts, and the structures and rules by

which these might be used), social culture (the social institutions of a culture, and the rules of behaviour that regulate these), and subjective culture (the shared ideas and knowledge of particular social groups) in shaping individual and collective thought and action (Chiu & Hong, 2006).

A central concern of psychology is the search to explain the nature and development of human thought and activity. Historically, social scientists engaged in this search have focused on the individual, often in isolation from others and/or the cultural/historical settings in which they live and work. To address each of these issues in turn, individuals rarely live and work in isolation; we are enmeshed in social networks both physically proximate and virtual, from the beginning of our existence. These social networks range from the formally constituted, as experienced in institutions (including schools and workplaces) and organizations (such as political parties and special interest groups), through to those more informal networks that emerge through family, friendship, and affinity groupings. There has been increasing recognition that an individual's thoughts and behaviours vary considerably when participating across the range of these groupings, reflecting the shaping force that engagement in such groups has on thought and behaviour. Embedded in social networks are sets of cultural practices that are embodied in ways of thinking and acting, and those tools and artefacts that support and extend culturally specific thought and action.

At the core of a cultural psychology is the recognition that the self and the social worlds are inseparable; that the psychological and the sociocultural are 'mutually constituting' (Schweder, 1990; see also Markus & Hamedani, 2007), in an ongoing process of interaction between individuals, and their social and cultural worlds. Through the processes of mutual constitution, individuals and groups not only shape the contexts and settings in which they live and work, they are in turn shaped by them. In such a view, context and setting are integral to the constitution of human thought and activity, rather than variables to be taken into account when investigating a phenomenon. In short, we cannot separate mind and cognition from culture and context, values and beliefs, and a culturally mediated identity.

Cultural psychology and education

In the preface to *The culture of education*, Jerome Bruner states his 'central thesis is that culture shapes mind, that it provides us with the toolkit by which we construct not only our worlds but our very conceptions of our selves and our powers' (1996, p. X). For Bruner, a cultural psychology view of education is not one that requires constant cultural comparisons between diverse educational settings and practices; rather 'it requires that one consider

education and school learning in their situated, cultural context' (p. X). In outlining the features of a cultural psychology, Bruner reasserts the inherently social nature of mental activity, commenting that 'Mental life is lived with others, is shaped to be communicated, and unfolds with the aid of cultural codes, traditions, and the like' (p. XI). Bruner raises a number of questions that are asked of and through a 'culturalist' approach to education suggesting that such an approach:

> asks first what function 'education' serves in the culture and what role it plays in the lives of those who operate within it. Its next question might be why education is situated in the culture as it is, and how this placement reflects the distribution of power, status, and other benefits . . . culturalism also asks about the enabling resources made available to people to cope, and what portion of these resources is made available through 'education,' institutionally conceived. And it will constantly be concerned with constraints imposed on the process of education—external ones like the organization of schools and classrooms or the recruitment of teachers, and internal ones like the natural or imposed distribution of native endowment, for native endowment may be as much affected by accessibility of symbolic systems as by the distribution of genes. (Bruner, 1996, p. 11)

Culturalist views of learning and development recognize that development is not 'eternal', defined and determined by biology and chronology alone; rather, that it is 'historical', and is determined and defined by participation in sociocultural practices and the use of 'tools and signs' (Vygotsky, 1978). As Rogoff reminds us, 'people develop as participants in cultural communities. Their development can be understood only in light of the cultural practices and circumstances of their communities—which also change' (Rogoff, 2003, pp. 2–3).

The premise that informs the discipline of cultural psychology asserts that human experience is social and situated, both formative of and formed by culture. Rather than viewing the person strictly in terms of evolutionary and biological explanations of behaviour, a cultural psychology recognizes the social and, specifically, cultural aspects of human behaviour, and the ways by which we are engaged in culturally specific systems of meanings and practices. In early writings on this topic, Bruner described cultural psychology as 'an interpretive psychology [that] seeks out the rules that human beings bring to bear in creating meanings in cultural contexts' (1990, p. 12).

In this reading of human experience and meaning-making, psychological processes and the products, artefacts, and events that are fashioned through such processes are interdependent with the cultural practices and shared meanings (both public and private) in which these processes are embedded. A cultural psychology view of learning recognizes the diversity of human action and meaning-making and the ways in which cultural contexts influence the

meaning-making processes we employ (the tools by which we think and act) and the resultant products of such processes. The objects, images, ideas, and rituals of our milieu constitute the materials that shape our thinking in the very process of using these to shape our cultural interaction.

Through a cultural psychology lens, we are able to admit that an event may be interpreted in a range of ways, dependent upon the different cultural contexts in which the event is situated. The cultural psychology agenda may be described as one that seeks to illuminate the ways in which cultural practices and meanings, and human agency—made up of psychological processes and structures—are interrelated, and reinforce and sustain each other.

A cultural psychology of music education

What can we learn when we bring the principles of cultural psychology to bear on music education? At one level, the investigation of diverse music education settings and practices provides opportunities for music educators to question some of the taken-for-granted assumptions that have shaped music education, and to reconsider the aims, theories, and practices of music education. At a more complex level, a cultural psychology approach to music education provides opportunities to look more deeply into the practices of music education in order to understand the role that culture plays in shaping: children's musical learning and thinking; teachers' music teaching and learning; the formal and informal institutions and structures within and through which learning and teaching occur; and the intersection of these processes in the development of musical thought and practice. A cultural psychology of music education might assist us in identifying the characteristic features of an 'enabling culture' (Bruner, 1996, p. XV) of music learning.

Recent studies in music education have sought to investigate the ways in which different constituencies construe music, music-making, and music education, and the ways in which these constructions are culturally bound (see for example Green, 2001, 2008; Marsh, 2008). These studies have revealed a number of anomalies between the ways in which, for example, children engage in music-making when working in children's communities of cultural practice, as opposed to those communities that are part of the institutionalization of formal education, or the experimental laboratory.

In recognizing that development is an interactive process between the child and surrounding environment—defined socially and culturally—the ways in which music education is construed, the institutions through which it is effected, and the musical values such education purports to promote warrant a culturalist scrutiny.

This volume seeks to explore the ways in which the 'once and future discipline' of cultural psychology may contribute to our understandings of the ways in which music education and engagement occur in a range of cultural settings, the shaping influences and forces of these cultural settings, and the subsequent implications of such understanding for the theory and practice of music education. The volume draws together the work of a number of music education researchers whose work references a cultural psychology framework; it does not purport to be a handbook of cultural psychology in music education; rather it seeks to provide an introductory perspective in this developing field, and to indicate some future investigative pathways for a cultural psychology of music education.

Plan of the book

Music education is interdisciplinary by nature. Increasingly, music education scholars and researchers have turned to disciplines beyond music and education, including psychology, sociology, and, more recently, anthropology in order to develop further investigative tools and theoretical frames through which the fundamental questions of music education might be addressed. Questions concerning the nature of musical development, music learning and teaching, the culture(s) of music and music education, the relationships that exist between identity and music learning, and musical childhoods have been re-examined from varying disciplinary perspectives, providing increased insight into the complexities of these issues.

In this volume, music education scholars and researchers have addressed the notion of a cultural psychology of music education through the intensive investigation of the interaction of culture, context, and setting on music learning. Peter Dunbar-Hall and Kathryn Marsh examine two distinctive musical cultures in which children participate, those of the Balinese music tradition, and the children's playground, in order to identify the ways in which music learning practices are shaped by the values, identities, and cultural practices of these settings. In a similar vein, Patricia Shehan Campbell provides an overview of the ways in which differing cultural groups in the USA value and practice forms of music-making and music education. These three researchers all bring an ethnomusicological lens to the cultural psychology of music, reflecting the complementary nature of some ethnographic and cultural psychology approaches (Cole, 1996).

Peter Dunbar-Hall employs a cultural psychology lens to explore the ways in which Balinese children's learning of traditional music and dance is shaped by their culture's uses and valuing of music, and beliefs and practices concerning teaching and learning. Drawing on more than a decade of fieldwork in Bali,

Dunbar-Hall demonstrates that the purposes, methods, and outcomes of music education in this setting position children's music-making as central to the cultural practices of Balinese society. The point of music education is 'to be able to recreate examples of repertoire, and to recreate them within strictly held guidelines of style and aesthetics' (Dunbar-Hall, this volume, p. 23) in order to perform this repertoire as a valued participant in ritual and cultural practices. Dunbar-Hall's careful description and analysis of the 'culturally or socially embedded expectations of learners' (this volume, p. 19) and their communities, illustrates the mutually reinforcing nature of these expectations and the practices that arise from them. He demonstrates the ways in which children's participation in learning traditional Balinese music and dance not only provides them with a means to participate in music activity in ritual and ceremony, but also of learning the codes and conventions of Balinese society, and of being and becoming Balinese.

Kathryn Marsh's chapter examines the ways in which children make meaning through musical play. In locating play as a cultural construct, Marsh focuses on three key issues, those of appropriation, transculturation, and identity, in order to highlight the nature and extent of children's agency in the interactive pedagogy of the playground. The role of play as a shaping force in the development of children's thought and action has been recognized for some time: what is less well understood are the musical dimensions of such play, and the ways in which children exercise cultural agency through the self-initiated musical play that occurs in the informal spaces and places of schools and communities. Marsh argues that playgrounds not only draw on the surrounding musical cultures created by adults, but also generate their own unique musical culture, within which particular formulae of musical generation and performance are created and enacted. Such a process, she argues, constitutes the generation of a 'cultural toolkit' on which children draw progressively in their ongoing musical development and maturation. Marsh emphasizes the range and diversity of influences that young children encounter through their increasing access to and interaction with various forms of media, and the increasingly global nature of the populations of many schools and communities. These influences include:

> parents, siblings, and other relatives; mediated sources found on television, CDs, cassettes, films, DVDs, videos, the radio, and Internet; peers in the playground and classroom; teachers, and the materials which form part of school curricula; and experiences which may be gained in countries of birth, on visits to countries of cultural origin, or on holidays in other localities (Marsh, this volume, p. 43).

Marsh suggests that all of these influences feed back into the culture of the playground, where children exercise autonomy beyond that experienced in the

adult-mediated world. She provides numerous illustrations of the ways in which children are active agents in meaning-making in and through their musical play. She suggests that such play experiences generate a child-directed pedagogy that might inform those learning and teaching practices enacted in the classroom.

In her chapter, **Patricia Shehan Campbell** investigates the ways in which children become attuned to a collective musical culture. Using the concept of 'musical enculturation' (Herskovits, 1949), Campbell traces the musical pathways traversed by children from a range of cultural traditions: from the beginnings of musical speech in infancy and early childhood, through their encounters with media and technology, to their engagement with and in American 'ethnic' cultures. Writing in the context of growing multiculturalism in the USA, Campbell focuses the inquiry lens on immigrant children and their families, groups who are 'still close to an identifiable and distinctive culture that is based upon the *mores* and values of a particular ethnicity' (this volume, pp. 66). For the purposes of Campbell's chapter, five 'ethnic' traditions are examined; those of Irish-Americans, Mexican-Americans, Vietnamese-Americans, African-Americans, and Native Americans. Through this exploration, Campbell provides examples of the diverse nature and practices of musical parenting, enculturation, and socialization, and the ways in which children make musical meaning from these experiences. Campbell, along with a growing body of scholars (Barrett, 2003, 2006, 2009; Marsh, 2008; Young, 2008), acknowledges the diverse and rich musical skills, knowledge, and resources that children bring to their formal music learning in school settings, and seeks to provide some insights into the nature and extent of these skills, knowledge and resources, and the environments and sociocultural practices that foster these. Campbell draws on two key theories that have sought to incorporate sociocultural elements and influences into the investigation of learning and development: Urie Bronfenbrenner's (1979; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998) ecological systems theory and Arjun Appadurai's (1996) theory of '-scapes'. While acknowledging the broad dimensions of each of these theories, Campbell's interest lies in those that children encounter most readily, the micro- and meso-systems of the home, family, school, and neighbourhood (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998), and the ethno-, techno-, and media 'scapes' (Appadurai, 1996) that shape children's interactions in these systems of home, school, family, and neighbourhood. Campbell suggests that children's musical worlds comprise a 'complex auditory ecosystem' (this volume, p. 77) that warrants further investigation in our endeavours to understand children's musical learning.

Jackie Wiggins, Cecelia Hultberg, Magne Espeland, and Susan O'Neill draw on the Vygotskian tradition of cultural psychology—specifically, the ways in

which this has been taken up in educational theory and practice through the work of scholars such as Jerome Bruner. Their work reflects a concern with the concepts of scaffolding (Wiggins), cultural tools as embedded in technological advances (Espeland) and pedagogical traditions and techniques (Hultberg), and the mediation of identity through place and shared space (O'Neill).

Jackie Wiggins' study of teacher-supported collaborative songwriting events provides a context for the investigation of learner agency and teacher scaffolding in children's musical learning. Wiggins works from the premise that learning is an interactive social process that is characterized by negotiation and mutuality (Bruner, 1996; Wenger, 1998), undertaken in a community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991), and located in physical settings (often classrooms) that in turn shape the nature, intent, and purposes of interaction. Through a careful analysis of her own and others' actions as teachers scaffolding children's musical learning, Wiggins explores the ways in which teacher actions may enable and/or constrain student learning and sense of agency in the music-making process, and the ways in which learners draw on the cultural signs and tools at their disposal to make meaning from these experiences. Wiggins' presentation of scaffolding as a teaching strategy acknowledges contrasting views of the pedagogical intentions and learning outcomes of scaffolding. These include a view of scaffolding as an enabling learning strategy that supports and empowers learners (Woods, Bruner, & Ross, 1976), and one that presents scaffolding as an intrusion on learners' thought and activity (Allsup, 2002), a form of control and constraint. Wiggins points to the need to be cognizant of the potentiality of both these perspectives, citing Bruner's view that 'pedagogy is never innocent' (1996, p. 63). Wiggins also considers the different dimensions of scaffolding—musical and social—and points to the ways in which these forms of scaffolding can work in tandem to support and extend student interaction and learning. She suggests that careful attention to these two views of scaffolding is needed in order to balance the potential tensions that may exist between strategies that aim to promote learner agency and those that reflect the structuring and directive processes of teacher scaffolding.

Cultural psychology approaches recognize the role that 'cultural tools' such as signs, symbols, and artefacts play in shaping thought and action. Drawing on Vygotsky's cultural historical theory (Vygotsky, 1978, 1986), **Cecilia Hultberg** reminds us of the complex relationships that exist between sign, symbol, artefact, and the need to consider these in interaction rather than isolation. The central thesis of the Russian cultural–historical school rests in the view that 'the structure and development of human psychological processes emerge through culturally mediated, historically developing, practical activity' (Cole, 1996, p. 108). Attention to the interactive relationships between the
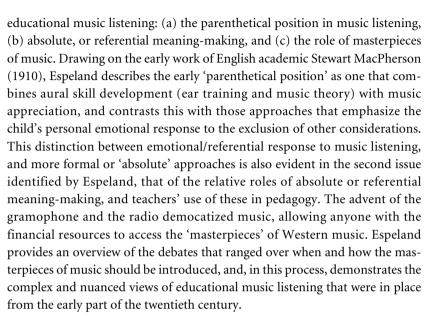
concepts of (a) mediation through artefacts, (b) historical development (as evidenced in enculturation and the transmission of cultural knowledge and ways of being through successive generations), and (c) practical activity, emphasizes the social origins of learning and development (Cole, 1996, p. 111). Hultberg examines two teachers' ways of working—one in a notation-based music environment, the other in an aural-based music environment—in order to illustrate the complex interplay between, and varying functions of, tools and artefacts such as notated (printed scores) and aural (performances) presentations of musical works. She interrogates the ways in which these teachers draw on their knowledge as culture bearers of the musical (Western classical music and Zimbabwean marimba ensemble respectively) and pedagogical (Suzuki piano instruction and aural-based group teaching) traditions within which they work, in order to use notated, aural, and embodied presentations of the music to prompt student thought and practical activity. In these environments, the teachers use student performances as cultural tools for reflection and understanding in their own learning as teachers, as well as that of their students. Hultberg also illustrates the varying functions a musical instrument might play in students' learning, as, for example, a mechanical tool for practising or experiencing specific aspects of technique, or as a cultural tool for the expression of musical meaning. Importantly, she emphasizes the need to draw students' attention to the interplay of cultural tools in music learning, as, for example, in the interplay between cultural tools, such as conventions of structuring musical ideas, conventions of expressing musical ideas, notations of musical ideas, and the sound-making possibilities of musical instruments.

Magne Espeland draws on Bruner's (1996) nine tenets of a cultural psychology in order to frame the history of music listening practices in music education and outline a potential application of the tenets to future music education work. Espeland affirms that listening is fundamental to music experience, but makes some distinction between (a) listening in and through performance and composition, (b) what he terms 'other "listening" disciplines' (this volume, p. 146), such as music history, music analysis, and music theory, and (c) 'educational music listening' (this volume, p. 146). This latter is defined by Espeland as 'different ways of educating young people into recognizing, understanding, and appreciating central aspects of the sounding essences of particular pieces of music and their respective contexts' (Espeland, this volume, p. 146), and is the focus of the chapter.

Espeland's historical account of 'educational music listening' illustrates the ways in which cultural tools embedded in technological advances, for example the gramophone, shape the ways in which we engage with music and music learning. He identifies three major issues that have emerged in approaches to

educational music listening: (a) the parenthetical position in music listening, (b) absolute, or referential meaning-making, and (c) the role of masterpieces of music. Drawing on the early work of English academic Stewart MacPherson (1910), Espeland describes the early 'parenthetical position' as one that combines aural skill development (ear training and music theory) with music appreciation, and contrasts this with those approaches that emphasize the child's personal emotional response to the exclusion of other considerations. This distinction between emotional/referential response to music listening, and more formal or 'absolute' approaches is also evident in the second issue identified by Espeland, that of the relative roles of absolute or referential meaning-making, and teachers' use of these in pedagogy. The advent of the gramophone and the radio democatized music, allowing anyone with the financial resources to access the 'masterpieces' of Western music. Espeland provides an overview of the debates that ranged over when and how the masterpieces of music should be introduced, and, in this process, demonstrates the complex and nuanced views of educational music listening that were in place from the early part of the twentieth century.

'What music to listen to? And how?' are fundamentally cultural questions, indeed, psychocultural questions, as well as educational questions. In pointing to possible worlds of educational music listening, Espeland draws on Dissanyake's notion of 'artification' (Dissanayake, 2007), described as 'making use of and responding to aesthetic operations' (2007, p. 793). For Espeland, artification, evidenced in practices that are student-centred, eliciting student responses, involving artistic expression, interpretive reasoning, discovery, and problem-solving, provides a means to revitalising and making relevant music listening practices in contemporary music education. Such practices draw on many of Bruner's tenets of a cultural psychology, and, Espeland foreshadows, challenge the music education community to rethink current music listening theory and practice.

Susan O'Neill commences her discussion of culture and learning in and through music performance by highlighting the potentially conflicting social agendas with which educators are asked to work: those of 'acknowledging and mediating the unique identity of individuals or groups while at the same time occupying a shared space where all people, regardless of their cultural background, feel a sense of value and belonging' (this volume, p. 179). O'Neill asks us to consider the practical challenges of recognizing and working with cultural difference, and the ways in which we might address these in learning and teaching contexts. In a multidisciplinary approach, O'Neill draws together ideas from multicultural educational theory and practice, social psychology, and cultural psychology to interrogate what is understood and intended by
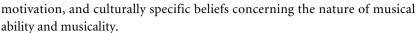
multicultural music education. She argues that dialogic approaches to music performance learning provide opportunity for the engagement of the self in and through culture, which in turn may prompt greater understanding of culture, self, and other, including self as other (the dialogic self).

The final three chapters in this volume draw on variants of cultural psychology to investigate musical learning and development, and the acquisition of musical expertise. Susan Hallam considers research in cross-cultural studies of music learning and development in order to consider the potential interplay between 'universal' aspects of human learning, the role of culture, and genetic inheritance. Both Graham Welch and Margaret Barrett investigate the cultural settings and practices of the English cathedral choir in order to identify the characteristic features of learning in these settings, and the sociocultural structures that support and shape these.

Susan Hallam interrogates notions of musicality and musical expertise through the lenses of neurological and psychological research, in order to consider the role and function of culture in musical learning and development. Approaches to the study of culture and behaviour have ranged from relativist views that suggest that human behaviour is defined by cultural settings, to absolutist views that culture plays little part in shaping human behaviour. Hallam points to middle-ground views between these two extremes, specifically universalist and ecoculturalist views, that suggest that whereas there are aspects of psychological thought and activity common to all humans, these are shaped differently by the cultural contexts into which we are born and live. Hallam provides an overview of research investigating both commonalities and differences in musical thought and behaviour across and within cultures in order to interrogate different cultural perceptions of 'musicality' and the ways in which these might change in time and place. Commencing from the viewpoint that 'the propensity for musical development and . . . musicality is as universal as linguistic ability' (this volume, p. 203), Hallam illustrates the interaction between culture, development, and the acquisition of musical expertise through the analysis of a broad range of research. She presents a number of points, including the view that prolonged music engagement, particularly as performers, shapes neurological structures and processes in ways that reflect our 'learning biographies' in and through culture. Hallam outlines the ways in which musical expertise is acquired in communities of practice in which particular forms and processes of musical participation are culturally valued. She suggests that musical expertise might be explained, in part, by the amount of time spent in deliberate practice, and consideration of the complex interactions between individual knowledge, experience, and

motivation, and culturally specific beliefs concerning the nature of musical ability and musicality.

Cultural–historical activity theory (CHAT) provides the lens through which **Graham Welch** examines a significant cultural change in the centuries-old tradition of the English cathedral choir; the introduction of female choristers. CHAT also provides a means to interrogate the ways in which this change has been enacted and understood in contemporary life, and to consider the affordances and constraints of the cathedral in shaping the musical life and learning of female choristers. Welch traces the considerable history of the all-male choral tradition and provides a careful analysis of the social, cultural, educational, and musical factors that gave impetus to the introduction of female choristers to English cathedral choirs in the late twentieth century. This 'cultural shift' has not been without controversy. Welch draws on the Scandanavian approach to CHAT (Engeström, 2001) to analyse the 'activity system' of the English cathedral choir (including cultural artefacts, membership of groups within the cathedral community, established traditions and rules—including the ways in which the 'labour' of the choir is divided between members—and the goals and outcomes of the activity), to explain how the cultural change has been effected, and to illustrate the effect of this change on both the tradition of the English cathedral choir, and those who participate in that tradition. Welch's longitudinal case study of Wells Cathedral provides the data to focus on the latter point, specifically, chorister development for female choristers. Welch suggests that chorister development in this setting is 'nurtured, shaped, and constrained by systemized cultural practices' (this volume, p. 244) which operate reflexively to perpetuate a system while accommodating change.

The English cathedral choir also provides the context and setting for **Margaret Barrett's** investigation of the acquisition of early expertise. She considers the ways in which cultural systems shape human engagement and interaction, in order to illustrate the ways in which the cultural system of an English cathedral choir shapes the boy choristers' musical learning, identity, and development. Research suggests that the key to the development of expertise rests in two factors; (a) environmental conditions, including positive and supportive family values and structures, and early and continuous access to resources and education; and (b) appropriate education, including deliberate practice that is goal-focused, and critiqued and monitored by an expert other. Barrett's narrative analysis of a longitudinal case study of one English cathedral choir illustrates the ways in which these components are established in that setting. She also provides some insights into the personal costs of participating in this

community of practice, and the affordances and constraints encountered through participation.

In this opening chapter, I have endeavoured to provide a brief overview of the ways in which cultural psychology has re-emerged, and been taken up in the study of human thought and activity. This brief overview has surveyed the application of the theory and practice of cultural psychology to music education. The ensuing chapters provide a rich preliminary account of work in the field and shall, I hope, encourage further engagement and debate.

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